

CHAPTER 450

WATERCRAFT: COMMERCIAL PARASAIL OPERATIONS

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This chapter applies to all commercial parasail operations on waters of the Commonwealth.

4VAC15-450-20. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context clearly requires a different meaning, the following words and terms shall have the following meanings:

“Commercial parasail operation” means all parasail activities engaged in or caused to be engaged in by any person or legal entity with the object of making a profit or obtaining an economic benefit either directly or indirectly.

“Operate” means to navigate or otherwise control the movement of a vessel.

“Parasailing” means the activity in which an individual is transported or carried aloft by a parachute, sail, or other material attached to a towline which is towed by a vessel where the rider ascends into the air by the towline being extended from the vessel and remains suspended in the air as the vessel runs its course.

“Vessel” means every description of watercraft, other than a seaplane on the water, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.

“Waters of the Commonwealth” means any public waters within the territorial limits of the Commonwealth, the adjacent marginal sea and the high seas when navigated as a part of a journey or ride to or from the Virginia shore.

4VAC15-450-30. Commercial Parasailing Activities.

A. Commercial parasailing operators shall comply with the following provisions:

1. All commercial parasail operators shall have a valid Coast Guard License for carrying passengers for hire.
2. Vessels engaged in parasailing operations must be equipped with a rear launch

platform and direct launch and recovery hydraulic winch system used to pay out and reel in the towline.

3. Prior to leaving the dock, all passengers and parasail participants shall be required to view a parasail safety briefing video and/or be given a written parasail safety briefing handout. Briefing materials shall be consistent with information approved or provided by the Professional Association of Parasail Operators (PAPO).

4. Parasailing shall only be conducted from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

5. All parasail riders, when attached to the harness of a parasail canopy, shall wear a United States Coast Guard approved Type I, II, or III inherently buoyant non-inflatable personal flotation device that is in serviceable condition and of the proper size. The rider must be secured in a seat harness attached to an ascending type of parachute which is connected to the towline.

6. All parasailing operations shall include, in addition to the operator of the vessel, an observer 18 years or older at all times to monitor the progress of an airborne parasail rider and parachute.

7. All parasailing towing vessels, when operating more than 1,000 feet from shore, shall be equipped with a VHF radio that is in working order and tuned to Channel 16.

8. Parasailing shall be prohibited when there are sustained winds in excess of 20 mph/17.5 knots and/or seas in excess of 6 feet in the area of operation.

9. Parasail operation towlines shall not exceed 1,200 feet in total length on the vessel's winch drum or exceed 1,000 feet of towline from boat to canopy yoke while conducting parasail flight operations. All commercial towlines must have a minimum diameter of 3/8 inches, be a maximum length of 1,200 feet, and have a minimum tensile strength of 4,800 lbs. An in-service date shall be logged whenever new line is installed.

10. Parasail operators shall inspect the towline in its entirety daily for damage and/or wear and, if necessary, shall immediately replace the line. A minimum of 2 feet shall be trimmed from the towline bitter end within a maximum period of 7 days or every 400 flights or as may become necessary. The towline shall be kept clean and well maintained in accordance with manufacturers' specifications, requirements, and/or recommendations. A written log of such inspections and maintenance shall be kept at all times.

11. Parasail vessel operators shall at all times maintain a safe parasail chute distance from any surf-zone, shoreline, or fixed object when engaged in actual

parasail operations. This includes all of the following: (i) the canopy shall not be allowed to pass within three times the length of the towline from shore or any structure, (ii) when the wind has an onshore component, the canopy's minimum distance from shore is a function of wind speed as follows: either 1,000 feet or a sliding distance based on wind speed (0-5 mph – 600 feet, 6-10 mph – 1,000 feet, 11-15 mph – 1,800 feet, 16-20 mph – 2,400 feet).

12. Parasail operators shall only launch and land riders from the flight deck of the vessel. Spectators shall not be permitted on the launch/landing deck area while the vessel is engaged in actual parasail operations. At no time shall there be more than three passengers in any canopy. Multi-passenger flights shall only be conducted after the vessel operator has made reasonable judgment regarding the flight safety prior to each flight and then only under the following conditions: (i) wind conditions must be adequate, stable and persistent, (ii) sea conditions must be conducive to such activities, (iii) commercial equipment specifically designed and professionally manufactured for multi-passenger flight operations must be utilized, (iv) all equipment manufacturers' specifications, requirements and/or recommendations must be adhered to, and (v) the vessel's winch system must be equipped with a functional level-winder during all multi-passenger flights.

13. A person may not operate or manipulate any vessel by which the direction or location of a parasail may be affected or controlled in such a way as to cause the parasail or any person thereon to collide or strike against or be likely to collide or strike against any vessel, bridge, wharf, pier, dock, buoy, platform, piling, channel marker, or other object.

14. The deliberate lowering of any person attached to the parasail to be in contact with the water's surface (toe dipping) shall only be conducted after the vessel operator has made reasonable judgment regarding the safety of the activity and his or her ability to control such an activity and then only under the following condition: (i) wind and sea conditions are conducive to such activity. Deliberate dipping above the ankles or allowing a participant to touch the water during his or her flight within 200 feet of another vessel or object or within 50 feet of the stern of the tow vessel is prohibited.

15. Commercial parasail operators shall notify the Department's Law Enforcement Division Dispatch Office at least 14 days in advance of the commencement of annual operations.

4VAC15-450-40. Penalties.

Except as otherwise provided by statute, any person who violates any provision of this chapter shall be guilty of a Class 4 misdemeanor for each such violation as provided by § 29.1-746 of the Code of Virginia.